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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT HOLDS JIRGAS AROUND WAZIRISTAN TO ISOLATE TTP

REF: A) PESHAWAR 213; B) ISLAMABAD 2607; C) PESHAWAR 147; D) PESHAWAR 119

CLASSIFIED BY: Candace Putnam, Principal Officer, U.S. Consulate Peshawar.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. As fighting continues in South Waziristan, the Pakistani government has expanded its historic divide and conquer strategy with the Wazir and Mehsud tribes of the North and South Waziristan Agencies (NWA and SWA) to include military and civilian leaders and public relations initiatives. The effort has exposed the extent to which both the military and the civilians need a complex mix of active and passive tribal support to succeed during both ongoing combat operations and post-conflict reconstruction. If the Army can restore the writ of government in South Waziristan, there will be more options (and fewer excuses for not taking action) to move against extremists in North Waziristan.

¶2. (C) Between late September and late October, the GOP held four major jirgas (three with elders from the Mehsud, Ahmadzai Wazir, and Utmanzai Wazir and one with stakeholders in the Lakki Marwat district) in and near SWA. Chief of Army Staff General Kayani has launched a very public appeal to the Mehsuds, and PM Gilani has publicly embraced "patriotic" Mehsud tribesmen as distinct from the enemy comprised of foreign fighters. In the settled districts of Tank and Lakki Marwat, the GOP seeks to shore up local support and block the exit of militants into NWA.

In the Ahmadzai Wazir areas of SWA, the government has secured its supply routes based on the short-term interests it shares with a local militant commander. In NWA, the government feels it must maintain the tenuous alliance of local militant commanders if it hopes to conduct a successful campaign against the Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP).

¶3. (C) Awami National Party President Asfandyar Wali Khan fears a neutrality pact with the Wazirs is translating into safe harbor for militants fleeing into NWA and hopes that, eventually, the Pakistani military will have to move into NWA where it will clash with its proxy forces that continue to attack U.S. troops in Afghanistan. There is no evidence so far to support that hope. Meanwhile, the FATA Secretariat is

working with Mehsud elders to control the IDP situation and convince the sons of slain Mehsud tribal leaders to help re-establish civilian governance after the fighting ends. (See Ref A for more discussions on post-conflict assistance to South Waziristan.) End Summary.

Recent Jirgas in Tank and Lakki Marwat...

¶4. (SBU) During an October 30 visit to Peshawar, PM Gilani publicly embraced "patriotic" Mehsud tribesman as distinct from enemy foreign fighters. This followed a series of civilian and military initiatives. On October 20, NWFP Governor Owais Ghani had held a jirga in the city of Tank with Mehsud tribal elders, intended as a follow-up to the October 19 letter by Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Pervaiz Kayani that had called for the people of the Mehsud tribe to rise up against the TTP. The jirga declined to take any significant steps to condemn or form a lashkar against the TTP; however, it requested that government allow Mehsuds with temporary residences in the settled areas to register as IDPs, a request that the government declined. The jirga also asked that the government provide assistance to noncombatant Mehsuds attempting to escape the combat zone (Note: now underway - see septel), and that Pakistani security forces give the benefit of the doubt to fleeing Mehsuds who did not possess identification cards.

¶5. (SBU) On October 22, the government held a jirga with the attendance of tribal maliks and notables from throughout the district of Lakki Marwat, which shares a small border with the Mehsud area of South Waziristan. The jirga asserted its intention to cooperate with the government by re-forming its occasional lashkar, which will patrol against militant incursions and punish any Lakki Marwat residents who give sanctuary to militants. The lashkar demonstrated its seriousness of intent by destroying a fortified building previously occupied by militants in the restive Shah Hasankhel area of Lakki Marwat.

Earlier Jirgas in Wana and Miram Shah

¶6. (C) Ghani's very public appearance at the Mehsud jirga and the heavy attendance at the Lakki Marwat jirga contrasted substantially from the much lower-profile, but more significant, jirgas held prior to the operation among the Mehsud tribal neighbors, the Ahmadzai Wazirs (whose lands lie to the south and west of the Mehsuds') and the Utmanzai Wazirs (whose lands lie to the north). On September 30 in Wana, JUI-F-aligned cleric Maulana Deendar led the Ahmadzai Wazir delegation in its meeting with Shehab Ali Shah, the Political Agent for SWA. The Ahmadzai agreed to allow the Pakistani military safe-passage through Ahmadzai-controlled territory, asking in return only that the Pakistani military not launch military operations targeting Ahmadzai territories.

¶7. (C) The jirga at which Utmanzai neutrality was achieved, on the other hand, was more contentious; while it took place September 24, most of the issues raised remain unresolved. The Utmanzai elders present promised that their members would allow the Pakistani military safe passage through its territory, and the government made clear that it would hold accountable any Utmanzai giving sanctuary to fleeing TTP members. In return, the jirga requested several Pakistani government concessions. They asked that funds that had allegedly been previously allocated for development projects in NWA, but never actually spent, be released. They also asked that curfew be lifted so that businesses could reopen and that alleged drone attacks cease. The jirga asked for assurances that the government would not close Razmak Cadet College, a quasi-military preparatory school for boys that has remained closed since a June evacuation in which 46 of the students were briefly kidnapped by militants (ref D).

¶8. (C) The government gave the requested assurances that Razmak Cadet College would not be permanently shuttered or moved. They

made no commitment to answer any of the jirga's other demands. However, the North Waziristan Political Agent contacted USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) shortly after the conclusion of the jirga to request that twenty OTI projects directed toward North Waziristan that the government had previously shelved, citing security, should be reactivated as conditions had now improved. A Consulate contact also noted that military patrols of North Waziristan areas outside of the army's primary logistical routes had diminished.

In South, Jirgas to Reinforce Position

¶9. (C) The four major jirgas held by the Pakistani government in the area around SWA over the past month are only the latest in a flurry of meetings that the government has held since its June announcement of intent to mount an operation into Waziristan. However, the results of these jirgas give insight into the varying level of government confidence in its ability to control events in these various areas.

¶10. (C) In the Mehsud diaspora in the districts of Tank and Dera Ismail Khan immediately to the east of South Waziristan, government-backed anti-TTP militant groups drawn from the Mehsud and Bhittani tribes have effectively ended a TTP reign of terror through extrajudicial killings of their own over a period of several months beginning in spring of 2009. The jirga held in Tank did not represent the interests of these anti-TTP militant groups, however. The leaders and other participants in this jirga were traditional tribal elders and religious figures, a class decimated by TTP assassinations over the past two years whose lack of an armed following was reflected in their refusal to commit to a stance against the TTP. According to FATA Secretary of Law and Order Tariq Hayat Khan, the government is now attempting to build up these elders as intermediaries between itself and the Mehsuds outside of South Waziristan, in hopes that they will be able to transition into a leadership role within South Waziristan once the campaign has concluded.

¶11. (C) In the district of Lakki Marwat, the long-time militant control in North and South Waziristan have never translated into the insecurity faced over past years by its neighboring districts of Bannu, Tank, and DI Khan. Consulate contacts attribute this to the district's system of community defense groups, who have intimidated would-be militants and kept local police informed of suspicious activities. Lakki Marwat is being studied as a model for engagement between security forces and community in other areas at high risk of militant penetration, such as the recently secured portions of the Malakand division; the government has little fear of insecurity in this district but is merely continuing its usual procedure of rallying local population to guard against militant incursions.

¶12. (C) In the Ahmadzai Wazir areas of South Waziristan, Consulate contacts believe the government's writ does not extend outside of its headquarters in the city of Wana and the various troop encampments in and near certain Ahmadzai villages; the rest of the territory is controlled by militant leaders affiliated with militant commander Maulvi Nazir. The jirga in Wana, held in advance of the operation in SWA, was held to secure the army's access to logistics through this area. Consulate contacts say that the local maliks who attended the jirga were speaking on behalf of Nazir, whose long-time opposition to the presence of Uzbek foreign fighters who support the TTP (ref C) and clashes with the TTP in August give him a shared interest in the TTP's defeat. A consulate contact who attended the jirga said that other attendees had told him Nazir had urged the delegation to give the government these guarantees.

In North Waziristan, Worries About Militants' Neutrality

¶13. (C) In North Waziristan, Consulate contacts say the government's writ does not extend outside of the city of Miram Shah and troop encampments in and near certain towns. Much of

the rest of the territory is controlled by militant leaders allied to militant commander Hafiz Gul Bahadur. In order to block a TTP retreat to the north, the government must position and resupply a large force in North Waziristan - impossible without the acquiescence of the militants. Unlike in the case of the Ahmadzais, the Utmanzai maliks who participated have received relatively little guidance from Bahadur and therefore are essentially speaking for themselves. Bahadur has not yet broken the informal truce that has held for the past few weeks. However, the Pakistani authorities are not confident that this will hold and have been scrambling to minimize irritants between the military and the Utmanzais - North Waziristan's Political Agent told us October 27 that he had held six jirgas in the previous eight days.

¶14. (C) Frontier Corps chief MG Tariq Khan recounted to CG November 3 that he had predicted to Chief of Army Staff General Kayani that the NWA Wazirs would stay out of the fight against rival Mehsuds with our without jirga negotiations. "That is one of the peculiar dynamics of the Waziristans." For his part Awami National Party leader Asfundyar Wali Khan told CG that he feared the militants would exploit a neutrality pact with the NWA Wazirs and use the Pakhtunwali tradition of shelter to find shelter. Like FATA Secretariat Chief Habibullah Khan (ref A), he expressed the hope that the Army eventually would have to tackle North Waziristan. MG Khan did not rule out that possibility, especially if local support for the militants continues to erode.

¶15. (C) Comment: The GOP's extensive efforts to variously cajole, neutralize and threaten the Mehsud and Wazir tribes demonstrated the complexity of the Waziristan environment, both for ongoing combat operations and post-conflict development work. So far, there have been no concrete signs the Army plans to take on extremists in North Waziristan. But if they can restore the writ of government in South Waziristan, there will be more options (and fewer excuses for not taking action) in North Waziristan. End comment.

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